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## CONTENT AND METHOD IN INDUSTRIAL HISTORY

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The content of industrial history is universal. Even the most specialized of political, religious, and social historians take cognizance of economic influences. They are omnipresent, though possibly not omnipotent. To construct an economic or industrial history, then, is to follow the thread of economic interest throughout recorded history. But that is an impossible program for a high-school course limited to one year in time, and to adolescent comprehension in content. The capacity and advantage of the student are the great eliminators. Much history passeth his understanding. More of it serves no conceivable utility. Only as a minister to youthful growth and as a social science furnishing a new window upon life may industrial history justify itself through the creation, not of a jumbled memory, but of a point of view.

For industrial history is a point of view, a way of looking at the economic backgrounds upon which civilization has been reared. To a greater extent than political history, at least in high-school treatment, it deals with facts in large masses, constructing a philosophy rather than a narrative, and formulating for its younger votaries a creed rather than a record. Its service in the schools is to tune the growing spirit into harmony with his race, with Kipling to "Tell him I too have known," and out of the greeds and strifes of past achievement to find for him in man's long struggle the secret of a reasonable contentment and a rational unrest.

Few high-school courses claim scholarship as a goal. Their proper aim is citizenship, and in so pre-eminently civic a subject as industrial history, historical minuteness is of subordinate importance. The teacher may be an economic historian, but the pupil is only a citizen in process, and for him the subject possesses far greater utility as a social science than as a branch of history. Indeed, a great charm of the study is its relationship with almost

every department of social interest, its inseparable economics, and its delicate reaction to the counter-currents of politics and religion, philosophy and science. A consequent difficulty is to select the wisest field for emphasis.

From the varied riches of industrial history the pupil should actually comprehend the growth of technique in the economic processes of production and exchange, as well as in the social processes of distribution and consumption. That is, he must understand the evolution from the Stone Age to modern industrialism sufficiently to account for the relative density of population and our greater command over nature. Moreover, even a very meager acquaintance with the long warfare between capital in its various forms and labor in its various degrees of subjection will place him in a better perspective toward the battle raging round us. From this foundation in materialism he may come to recognize how dynamic are the world's activities in all things, and how its complexes through endless vicissitudes are seemingly leading toward democracy through a warfare in which he will himself soon participate.

The establishment of a point of view influences the arrangement of material, and from the vast mosaic of historical data three large patterns may be chosen. The time-honored method treats industrial history by countries in a synopsis of their characteristics, with some regard for internal chronology. Its advantage is a certain regularity, or more properly insularity, because the surgeon and his victim are quite detached from the wider currents of the world. Its disadvantage is that in local history one falls into traditional limits of time and place, and abandons the larger perspectives.

In contrast to this local method, industrial history might be regarded as a history of ship-building, lumbering, mining, agriculture, manufactures, etc., with only incidental regard to other economic and historic factors. But this is scarcely an independent method. It serves best as a supplement, or as a mine for topics, a reminder that present-day trades and industries have had a past.

A third possibility is a survey of industrial history by types, showing how similar are the articles of production and methods of

manufacture and distribution among widely separated peoples at any given stage of industrial progress, subject of course to the influence of geography and kindred factors, and not without relation to the religious, social, and political conditions of the various groups. Hunnish hunters are the economic kinsmen of aboriginal Americans. Abraham in his pastoral setting would feel at home with modern Arabians. Mesopotamian agriculture suggests a twentieth-century reopening of long-neglected irrigation ditches. The mediaeval potter would understand his Chinese brother of today. While in the industrial stage of production, the problems precipitated by the tyranny of *laissez faire* in England are even now being fought out in Georgia cotton mills. Such an opportunity for institutional criticism invites considerations upon slavery, serfdom, feudalism, towns and cities, the growth of world-powers, and the clash for empire. It takes account of militarism, finance and taxation, and the development of economic theory to explain the objective phenomena of various periods. So the mercantilists as philosophers of nationalism, the physiocrats as champions of land reform, the classical school as spokesmen for industry unfettered, and the various radical movements of nineteenth-century liberators, all find their logical place in a scheme of history which views industrial processes by types. The type method is undoubtedly best fitted to establish industrial history in its proper relation to history and the social sciences.

Accepting the type method as, on the whole, the most serviceable, one has by no means committed himself to a radical program. It is quite possible to accommodate a most orthodox attitude toward the content of industrial history to the ideal of finding parallels or sequences in modern experience, and at the same time to recognize that industrial history is only a fragment of the whole. Industrial conditions are a self-evident background for politics, sociology, religion, philosophy, indeed almost all human thought. Yet only at times do they frankly seize the foreground, and due allowance for the influence of mind over matter recognizes the existence of upper currents in human life only indirectly concerned with its material aspects.

From the viewpoint of democracy and modern industrialism, anthropology is more illuminating than ancient history. The

elementary processes were almost universally acquired long before recorded history, and they are, still, more vital to the economic life of man than are most of the details of ancient annals. Indeed, the contribution which ancient history does make to industrial is not the record of sporadic development of temporary institutions, but rather the relation of early arts, manufactures, and commerce to political and social organizations, to agrarian troubles, aristocracies and proletariats, to commerce, and the conflict for empire.

The industrial history of antiquity may well begin with the Babylonians, Assyrians, Phoenicians, Egyptians, and Israelites, but the time for them is short. Babylonian lessons are in irrigation, conquest, architecture, and rapid communication. Egypt furnishes citations for monoliths and irrigations, for perennial fertility, for caste systems foisted upon slavery, and for the temptation offered by wealth and luxury to strength and rapacity in a melting-pot of conquerors. Greece defies analysis, but the early "influence of sea power upon history," the factor of language as an integrator of nationality, the significance of commerce as the key to empire and the expander of Greek culture, as well as the decadent corrosion of luxury, all claim a natural emphasis.

Unlike the other states of the ancient world, Rome looms larger than ever in a century more and more animated by lust, for world-power, on the one hand, on the other, for a world-federation. The story of Rome's rise, glory, and fall offers a harmonious and unified picture of industrial causes and effects in their operation upon a highly organized society. The struggle for a Mediterranean lake, the rise of senatorial land-grabbers on the ruins of peasant proprietors crushed by slave competition, the land problem, with the projects of the Gracchi and the temporary solution of the civil wars, and, finally, the conquest of the East, with its sequence of stimulation, luxury, and decay, form an economic interpretation for the Republic.

For the Empire, methods of colonial administration, army enlistment, police control, taxation, and government support create a superstructure from which to view a population being taxed out of existence, a commerce unhealthy in its excess of imports over exports, and a people enervated and drained of vitality and patriotism. Here is a fertile field for modern comparison, since all societies

as living organisms represent in their metabolism the conflict of vitality and decay.

The barbarian invasions are a fruitful study for the American, who now confronts a similar migration, peaceful, as that was to a great extent, but so tremendous in its potentialities for good and for evil that the completed story of its fourth- and fifth-century forerunner is profoundly suggestive. Who made good additions? What did they contribute to the body politic? How did they learn to appreciate and to preserve the heritage of the past? These are realities at a time when the Anglo-American is passing on the torch to the Slav-American and other hyphenated newcomers.

The industrial life of the Middle Ages encourages those broad sweeps of history which always stimulate adolescent enthusiasm. The youthful mind more readily grasps a large idea than a small, and welcomes a glib philosophy of history more heartily than its minor details—hence youthful pleasure in a dualistic universe, in a conflict of virtue with vice, pessimism with optimism, light with darkness, progress with reaction, or in any of the obvious antitheses. Such is the appeal of the tidelike conflict of East and West, which, with its antagonisms of race, religion, and greed for empire, never escapes an economic foundation, whether one contemplates Phoenician trade or Crassus' expedition, Jeb el Tarik's march through Spain, or Francis I's and William II's love for Turks, though of course no better refutation exists of the completeness of such an interpretation than the crusades, in which so many motives crystallized into action, partly fanatical, largely adventurous, and in time even traditional. An equally telescopic conception sees in Charlemagne's eastern campaigns, and in German expansion beyond the Elbe the European counterpart of American conquest of the West.<sup>1</sup> Dangerous though parallels may be, the eastward spread of European culture foreshadows the westward spread of our own, and links satisfactorily with the enterprises of Czar Peter and the builders of modern Russia.

Mediaeval industrial history comprehends two broad considerations which deserve greater prominence than they usually receive: First, the evolutionary cycle of industrial unrest, the pro-

<sup>1</sup> James Westfall Thompson, "The German Church and the Conversion of the Baltic Slavs," *American Journal of Theology*, April and July, 1916.

tests of labor against extortion, and the methods by which these have been met or silenced. In this it is only just to recognize the intelligent efforts of the fathers toward solving the problems of poverty, sanitation, and the like. For example, the "Acts of the Privy Council" under Queen Elizabeth include many data on sane housing, street cleaning, and the avoidance of plague and pestilence; enactments made for the benefit of the rich, but most salutary for the poor. Secondly, taxation and finance are so engrafted in modern industrial organization that their history is essential, if only to rescue future publicists from error. Thus not long ago an influential supporter of the Lloyd-George budget, a chairman of the Land Reform Association, a member of Parliament well connected in British circles, in addressing our school declared that customs and excise dated from Charles I. In the case of customs, he was many centuries behind the times; for excise, he was a trifle too early. An intelligent study of industrial history ought to have included taxation, and to have guarded him from so egregious a blunder.

Indeed, taxation sheds a particularly illuminating ray over the industrial life of the taxpayers, and from the dawn of modern history, especially with the rise of powerful national states, it affords a constant approach to industrial history. It interprets mercantilism; it explains the colonial policy of eighteenth-century governments; it accounts for the prostration of the landed interest in pre-Revolutionary France, and the rise of the physiocrats; and, in the nineteenth century, it coincides with industrial life and policy among the western nations, altogether a field worth cultivating and not to be abandoned to the theoretical economists. But this is anticipating.

In their long period of tutelage, the barbarians erected a military caste upon the foundation of feudalism and serfdom. Hence the mediaeval manor presents some analogy with the antebellum plantation, while the mediaeval town, expanding through the purchase of privileges and exemptions by rich burghers from needy kings and barons, nourished that bourgeois class which dominates modern life.<sup>1</sup> The growth of industry and commerce,

<sup>1</sup> For a brilliant epitome of bourgeois origins, see Carl Lotus Becker, *Beginnings of the American People*, pp. 81, 82.

the development of banking, the refinement of technical processes, and the centralization of wealth contribute to mediaeval cities a very modern tone. Even the eternal problem of poverty echoes in the extremes of indigence and splendor, which cast so picturesque a glamor over the past, though educational foundations, hospitals, and cheap tenements, almost rent-free to the deserving, bear witness to constructive efforts not original with the twentieth century. The staples, then, of mediaeval industrial history are, necessarily, land tenure, including feudalism and serfdom; corporations, guilds and the rise of cities; banking, the evolution of capitalism, and the growth of commercial leagues, the last named being a new phase in the old question of sea power.

The influence of sea power upon economic history broadens in the mediaeval period. The Mediterranean never wholly lost its ancient importance. Justinian perceived in the sixth century that maritime supremacy was the clew to a restoration of the Empire. And in their turn, Venice and Genoa did not underestimate the seductions of Constantinople and the control of Asiatic communication. But with the development of Northern Europe, the Baltic, the North Sea, and the German rivers hotly contested the Mediterranean supremacy.

Among the countries to be studied, England's impress upon American institutions entitles her to first place. The economic struggle behind the British constitution, and the increasing class consciousness reflected in the Great Charter of John and its successive re-enactments provide valuable commentaries on the class alignment in contemporary America. The appearance of a third estate in the social revolution of John Ball or Watt Tyler in England, the Jacquerie in France, the Peasants' Revolt in Germany, and of a fourth estate in the invention of Gutenberg is as integral for industrial as for political history.

When to the class rivalries of mediaevalism are added the international rivalries of the early modern period and the cultural diffusions of the renaissance, the student has a foundation from which to view modern history with some intelligence. For simplicity, however, he had best confine himself to three or four considerations.



The sequence of colonial empires from Portugal through Spain, Holland, France, England, and, later, Italy and Germany is pre-eminently the domain of commercial and industrial history. This has been obvious to the textbook makers, but their treatment has been too literary. A series of maps from pre-Columbian times to the present day, indicating the growth and decline of commercial empires, particularly from treaty years or notable discoveries, would cover the work of many pages and visualize the race for power now culminating in the Great War. These maps would depict the extraordinary nineteenth-century revival of French and British empire, and would demonstrate Russian and American participation in the general movement toward world-powers. Nor are high-school pupils too young in this connection to balance the arguments of von Treitschke and his school on behalf of the uselessness of small nations—an issue of immediate interest.

A survey of manufacturing under the domestic and guild system heightens by contrast the undisputed climax of the course, the industrial revolution. But though their claims are weighty, is it not possible to moderate a little on the description of old machines? Insert pictures. They would save many pages, for historians are seldom mechanics, and their accounts of spinning jennies, and mules, and water frames are vague at best. They bewilder the future artisan, and daze the layman. In their place, how helpful it would be to know more about *laissez faire*; to understand Robert Owen's welfare work; to meet Lord Ashley, Richard Oastler, and the reformers; to trace the beginnings and rise of socialism; to estimate the economic bases of opposition, first to machines, then to reforms, and to appreciate European and American reaction to the free-trade propaganda.

Again mercantilism, as the dominant economic policy of the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century state, requires a further definition to establish its harmony with our newer nationalism, which utilizes the doctrine to justify the colonial and tariff policies accompanying the effort of manufacturing powers to control world-markets. The contrary doctrine of the physiocrats, suited to an agricultural state like eighteenth-century France, heightens the meaning of mercantilism, and leads to current views on single tax

and land tenure. Indeed, economic philosophy is essential for charting and interpreting the students' own world.

Having glimpsed thus hastily the economic forces and tendencies of the past, the first semester may terminate at any point subsequent to the industrial revolution. In any event, a whole semester is needed for the United States, and here the guide motif is revolution. America originally offered the grandest stage for a new liberty, and, peopled by victims of religious, political, and economic tyranny, she has clung to the ideal of a democracy, however imperfectly achieved. Three American centuries have now rung with protests chiefly economic. Economic motives fostered colonization; they precipitated the Revolution; they wrought for agglomeration and then for disintegration within the early republic; and, through the medium of slavery, they subverted the moral ideals of the people. Finally, the economic victory of New England in the Civil War molded our subsequent history upon a capitalistic basis,<sup>1</sup> bringing about in the march toward liberty that conflict with plutocracy which is the problem of present-day democracy, and which involves issues as vital for industrial welfare as ever confronted the fathers.

If the labor devoted to ancient and mediaeval industrial history is to bear fruit, life in America should unfold as an evolution from old-world antecedents. Thus the first settlements on the Atlantic seaboard and along the St. Lawrence constitute the American aspect of the expansion of Europe in the new nationalism then arising from the ashes of feudalism. Government encouragement of colonizing projects was a mercantilist expression of international rivalry. Paternal regulations of commerce and domestic life were further manifestations of the same policy, and suggest a comparison with French colonial methods in explanation of the outcome of French and British rivalry. In what economic respects was England the fit claimant for victory? And this achieved, what decision of the settlement of 1763 introduced the seeds of disunion?

The conquest of the Alleghanies and Kentucky represents the western phase of the Revolution, and the array of classes in the

<sup>1</sup> William E. Dodd, *Expansion and Conflict*, p. 328.

aftermath of the struggle reveals the pioneer West and South, that is the "up country" and the trans-Alleghany region, together with the remoter sections of New England, as allies in a common struggle against economic burdens. In this democratic movement, the conservative classes in the cities soon discovered that theirs was only a temporary interest. Hence the fervor of the Revolution subsided into the very cool calculations when the delegates to the Constitutional Convention were framing a fundamental law which safeguarded property so much more successfully than liberty.

Financial interests secured an adjustment in the East satisfactory to scrip-holders and debt speculators. In the West, the Whiskey Rebellion demonstrated that political loyalty was difficult to foster among economic malcontents imbued with a conviction that eastern traders and financiers were the sole beneficiaries of Federalist policy. Hostility to the refunding operations, the bank, and Jay's treaty, in part explains the Virginia and Kentucky Resolutions and western dreams of secession, which Burr's conspiracy came just too late to crystallize.

Fifty years of ante-bellum politics fathered tariffs and other federal measures rather as resultants of class and sectional interests than as a program for national welfare. The Hartford Convention and Nullification, and the agitations of 1820 and 1850, all denoted a local patriotism founded on sectional interests, which embraced local heroes like Clay, Webster, Calhoun, and even Cass and Benton of the older generation, and Sumner, Davis, and Douglas of the newer, in an affection seldom accorded to the presidents of the United States. These leaders were registering the will of a growing nation, divided between free labor and slave, manufacturer and staple farmer, producer and consumer, whose very existence was staked on a slavery issue so soon to fulfil Jefferson's prediction: "Nothing is more certainly written in the book of fate, than that these people are to be free."<sup>1</sup>

A new era of industrial progress attended the political unification wrought by the Civil War, and the organization of large-scale production renders this last stage the most complex of all, bristling with problems unsolved. From a contemplation of inventions,

<sup>1</sup> *The Works of Thomas Jefferson* (Federal edition), I, 77.

railroad construction, wealth increase and distribution, of tariffs, panics, and scandals; from a more or less sympathetic comprehension of populism, the Granger movement, and trust and labor organization which enlivened the century just closed, the future citizen is inducted into the topics of the present hour, face to face with the inscrutable "What next?" Rash the prophet; but youth dares all. Nor should sordid materialism strangle faith. Let the student realize how plastic, after all, is this conservative old world, how susceptible it is to the dynamic influence of a great cause or a great personality, and from the intelligent vantage-point of a knowledge of the past and an observation of the present, let him create a vision of the future, toward the shaping of which his own talents, be they small or great, may have some part.

Content in industrial history is so extremely rich that method merely seeks to extract the maximum of profit. For the first semester, a textbook is indispensable. The market is supplied, though the choice is not wide. But collateral reading and supplementary exercises fall within that domain of pedagogical prerogative where each is his own guide. Notebooks, maps, and research topics are time-worn devices. Lists of subjects merely inspire resentment. Even the items to be stressed are determined by class needs, and the teacher's equipment. In any event, the textbook provides a compass, and the huge scope of the work precludes elaborate experimentation.

The second semester marks, at Hyde Park, a more strenuous, but more interesting point in the teacher's province. Abandoning the text used in History B, he strikes out boldly in History A to construct textbooks by the notebook method. Coman's industrial history furnishes the teacher most of his material, which he prepares for the children's consumption on the lecture-method in a predigested process. The problem how to keep the class busy is solved, first, by insistence on careful note-taking in class, with frequent inspection of the books; secondly, by topics for research, with formal papers every four or five weeks at least; thirdly, by a scheme for reminding the young people of their impending responsibility. This involves a system of  $3 \times 5$  cards, following the graduate-student research-method, after a solemn lecture on the cautions and advantages of the system. These cards outline pre-

liminary oral reports; they are inspected, and then returned for use in the formal papers.

At Hyde Park, excellent library facilities in the neighborhood increase the opportunities for research, but any school could apply the card idea, if its only equipment were an encyclopedia. For example, one of my boys has been investigating mineral resources in the Thirteen Colonies. His chief source of material has been the section on mining in the articles on each of the states in the *Britannica*. He is happy; he is doing actual research in a small way; and he is gathering information useful to the class. Students who have already encountered this system in high school have taken a valuable step toward bridging the mysterious chasm between high school and college. Modest assignments are best, but in sufficient variety to insure original work, and to constitute a review.

Among collateral topics, local interests deserve prominence. They provide admirable "primary sources," and awaken an interest in wider fields. Whatever the topic, sources of information cannot be overemphasized, and the use of footnotes is imperative. Each report should be a monograph in form, with no mercy shown to adolescent reluctance to render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's. Quotation marks and footnotes record acts of virtue, and are a heroic recognition of the difference between mine and thine.

A useful work tonic is an exchange of clippings, through a clearing-house in which class members interchange newspaper and magazine findings on special fields of investigation.<sup>1</sup> Each thereby secures the help of all, and the class outlook is enlarged. Moreover, the special booklets embodying the final report make permanent records, frequently of high value.

Nothing need be said of bibliography. Local resources and limitations determine working conditions, and more detailed lists are available in the textbooks. Moreover, industrial history, in both content and method, rests not upon a historical apparatus, but upon a predetermined goal, and a spirit of co-operation in reaching it. These attained, formal content and pet devices are but minor considerations. History scorns a strait-jacket, and truth enters through many doors.

<sup>1</sup> A device suggested to the writer, and very successfully used by Miss Caroline M. Watson of Hyde Park.